



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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NEWS RELEASE

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Newport Kindergarten Teacher Receives \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

NEWPORT – In a surprise ceremony today (Tuesday, November 9, 2010), Governor Donald L. Carcieri and Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist presented the Milken Family Foundation 2010 Milken Educator Award to Dale Blaess, a full-day kindergarten teacher at the William J. Underwood School, in Newport.

Blaess [pronounced: Blaze] has been an early-childhood teacher in the Newport School District for eight years, and she has taught at Underwood for the past two years. She has been a lead teacher for mathematics, science, and literacy at Underwood, and she developed a kindergarten “pacing guide” for the Newport School District. Blaess holds a B.S. in early-childhood education from Columbus State University, in Georgia, and an M.A. in literacy from Roger Williams University. She taught in Georgia and Hawaii before coming to Rhode Island.

“In her short tenure as a teacher, Dale Blaess has made an impact on the lives of her students and the profession of teaching,” said Governor Carcieri. “She recognizes the critical connection between successful students and educator excellence, and she gives her time and ideas to improve our educational system. Her energy and commitment to her profession and students is truly inspiring, and she is very deserving of being the Rhode Island winner of a 2010 Milken Educator Award.”

“It is particularly gratifying to see the Milken Educator Award this year recognize the achievements of a kindergarten teacher,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “Preschool and kindergarten are the foundation for all that follows. Those school years can get our children off to the right start on their road toward an excellent education, graduation, and success. A great kindergarten teacher such as Dale Blaess has a positive effect on every grade in her school and on every pupil in her grade. The Regents thank the Milken Family Foundation for its support of education in Rhode Island, and we congratulate Ms. Blaess on receiving this award.”

“Dale Blaess is an innovator who uses technology extensively to expand the world of her classroom,” said Commissioner Gist. “She shares her teaching practices with her colleagues and with students at Salve Regina University. At the Underwood School, Dale created a buddy-mentorship program linking kindergarteners with 4th-graders. As we focus on improving early-childhood education in Rhode Island, Dale Blaess is a true role model for educators across our state.”

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“Milken Educators point to their award as a pivotal professional milestone. They understand that encompassed in this recognition is the responsibility to grow as a leader beyond the school level,” said Dr. Jane Foley, Milken Family Foundation senior vice-president. “Encouraged and supported, these outstanding educators discover a renewed passion and purpose as they stretch their professional practices and policy influence to even higher levels.”

The award, which comes with an unrestricted payment of \$25,000, honors exceptional educators for their work. Each recipient receives the award in a surprise ceremony; educators do not apply for the award, nor are they aware that they have been nominated for the honor.

This fall, 55 educators around the country will receive Milken Family Foundation 2010 Milken Educator Awards. The program has been administered in Rhode Island since 1990, and there have been 69 Milken Award winners so far in the state.

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